

OFFER FOR IOWANS

IDENTIFYING INFORMATION

Offer Identifier: H_588_8

Offer Name: Building Healthy Communities in Iowa—Investigating Health Problems

This offer is for a: status quo existing activity and improved existing activity.

Result(s) Addressed: Improve Iowans Health

Participants in the Offer: IDPH

Additional Stakeholders: Iowa Department of Public Safety, University of Iowa, University of Iowa Hygienic Laboratory, County Coroners, Iowa Department of Education, Iowa Department of Human Services, Iowa Department of Human Rights – Division of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning, Governor’s Office of Drug Control Policy, Iowa Workforce Development

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OFFER DESCRIPTION

The Health Buying Team is seeking offers that assure “All Iowans Have Access to Quality Care,” “Improve Quality of Life,” “Mitigate Against Outside Risk Factors,” and “Improve the Health Care System.” The Iowa Department of Public Health, in collaboration with the partners listed above, proposes using state appropriations for the following activities to achieve these strategies:

- 1) **State Medical Examiner:** Provide autopsy services statewide to determine cause and manner of death in cases outside the scope of a local medical examiner’s ability or training.
- 2) **Improved Service – Additional Funding for State Medical Examiner:** Preserve legal evidence and reduce stress to family members by hiring morgue assistants to receive and release bodies 24 hours a day. Hire staff to improve data and information technology performance by setting up a new database for preparing statistical reports, entering and filing medical investigation reports, and properly entering and retrieving other data. Hire a full-time receptionist to improve responsiveness to requests for autopsy results or requests for assistance from law enforcement and medical professionals. Hire additional investigators to assist local agencies and the state office in death investigations. Hire full-time autopsy technicians to help collect specimens and evidence. Currently, the office relies on part time emergency help to assist in performing autopsies. It is a continuous risk to use part time people to perform this function.
- 3) **Child Death Review/SIDS Autopsies:** Review medical and investigative information surrounding the death of any child aged 0-17 years who dies from any cause. Determine strategies that could reduce the number of future child deaths with similar circumstances. Establish firm diagnoses for infants who are suspected victims of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) by reimbursing for autopsies when no other funding source is available.

To support and strengthen the above activities, IDPH will perform the following activities using federal or other sources of funding:

- 1) **Health Statistics/Vital Records:** Provide health data and information to the public, other state agencies, the federal government, and other department programs through research, analysis, and publication. Record all vital events occurring in the state, such as births, deaths, and marriages, which serve as the population data critical to assessing the health of Iowans. Researchers from across the state are stakeholders of the health statistics/vital records program. These researchers benefit from the data the program maintains for the state. County recorders are the local authorities responsible for maintenance of vital events (birth, death, and marriage), which occur within their jurisdictions. They also distribute certified copies of these events to those individuals who have a right to obtain them. As a result, the county recorders collect and retain a fee associated with each certified copy.
- 2) **Iowa Domestic Abuse Review:** Review domestic abuse deaths in Iowa annually. Make recommendations regarding the prevention of future deaths. Prepare an annual report.
- 3) **Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS):** Collect prevalence data of self-reported health-risk behaviors (health status; health care coverage; tobacco use; alcohol use; body weight; hypertension; cholesterol awareness; cancer screening; oral health, HIV/AIDS awareness, etc.) of adult residents through an on-going statewide random telephone survey.

OFFER JUSTIFICATION

Return on Investment: Iowa's \$1,513,923 investment is enhanced by \$3,213,589 in other sources of funding including federal funding and retained fees for additional investigative, and data services. All Iowans benefit from death reviews and autopsies, analysis of health related data, and recording of statewide vital events. The health statistics program receives less than \$5,000 from the state general fund. Vital records is completely fee funded.

Disparate and at risk/vulnerable populations: The combined state and federal funding provides these services regardless of age, race or ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. Additional attention is provided to those most at-risk for SIDS or domestic abuse including youth and women. The youth survey will help improve services to youth in multiple health-related areas. Birth records are maintained and child-specific vital statistics are compiled.

Impact on Iowans: The State Medical Examiner has the responsibility of providing guidelines, assisting in death investigations, and performing autopsies for all 99 counties in Iowa. The number of cases referred to the State Medical Examiner and autopsied has increased from 189 in 2000 to 409 in 2003. During all of these years, Polk County had their own pathologist who performed the majority of the Polk County autopsies. Polk County has an appointed County Medical Examiner, as do most of the other 98 counties. The State Medical Examiner performs autopsies for all counties in Iowa. In evaluating the possibility of assuming the additional duties of the Polk County Medical Examiner, several things were considered including the number of unfinished cases in Polk County and staffing levels. The State Medical Examiner's Office recommended the County provide an additional part time forensic pathologist, an additional full time physician medical examiner, a full time physician assistant or administrator along with one additional investigator to meet the demands and workload of that office. The State Office would only have taken on the administration and duties of the Polk County Office if the county provided all the funds and personnel to do so without impinging on the already overworked State Medical Examiner Staff. It would be unfair to provide services to Polk County, which the office does not provide to other counties, unless Polk County were providing the personnel and funding to do so.

Much of the increase in caseload seen by the State Medical Examiner's Office has and will continue to be the result of a slight increase in the number of cases being requested by County Medical Examiners, who are now more aware of and trying to meet national standards as to which cases should be autopsied. This means more cases are being sent to the State Medical Examiner's Office, some of which used to be sent to other states for autopsy. Also, many pathology groups throughout the state who were performing state cases in the past are eliminating that part of their practice because they are not specifically trained in forensic pathology and are not interested in taking time out of their practice to testify in court. The new facility and current request for staff and funding is to provide services to all 99 counties throughout Iowa and fulfill the duties of the State Medical Examiner.

The State Medical Examiner is a major asset to the criminal justice system by providing postmortem examinations that assist in identifying unsuspected crimes, assistance in crime scene reconstruction, and expert testimony in civil and criminal legal cases. Examinations may identify a particular death as non-homicidal in nature and prevent unnecessary legal actions. Medical examiners also participate in gathering evidence, preserving appropriate specimens and evidence, determining the cause and manner of death, and assisting in the identification of the decedent.

The Bureau of Health Statistics records all vital events occurring in the state such as birth, death, and marriage, and has an interstate exchange agreement with all of the other states. The bureau registers approximately 100,000 vital events and issues about 85,000 certified copies annually. The data compiled and analyzed by this program is used for statewide health planning on a routine basis. It is typically the backbone of all health assessments conducted within the state.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND TARGET

Percent of Iowans rating their own health at good to excellent: Baseline 88% in 2003. Target 88%.

Percentage of autopsy reports completed within 90 days from date of death: 95%.

PRICE AND REVENUE SOURCE

Total Price: \$4,727,512 (\$1,513,923 state)

Expense Description	Amount of Expense	FTEs
Status Quo Direct Costs	3,682,903	36.70
Status Quo Administrative Costs	119,058	5.60
Improved Service Direct Costs	884,800	11.00
Improved Service Administrative Costs	40,751	1.68
Total	4,727,512	54.98

Revenue Description	Amount
Status Quo General Fund	588,372
Improved Service General Fund	925,551
Total State Funds	1,513,923
Other (retained fees)	2,663,892
Federal Funds	549,697
Total Other Sources of Funding	3,213,589
Total	4,727,512